

State P-16 Council:

Last week's joint meeting of the State Board of Education and the Tennessee Higher Education Commission successfully focused on the State P-16 Council's agenda for improving student readiness for college or career, particularly through increased student proficiency in mathematics at all levels. Certainly Governor Bredesen's announcement at the beginning of the meeting that a State residential high school in math and science is being considered underscored the importance of better preparation for students in these disciplines. For those of you who could attend the joint meeting, I believe you will agree that Dave Spence, President, Southern Regional Education Board, provided very valuable observations on the various ways that Tennessee could approach this State P-16 Council commitment to student learning in mathematics. The discussion among the Board and Commission members about this agenda was positive in addressing both concept and practical issues of mathematics standards redesign. I believe that an important foundation for this discussion was the information Board and Commission staff provided on converging initiatives, grant resources, and policy changes that make this the right time to capitalize on collaboration between K-12 and post-secondary education toward assuring student readiness for college. A repeated point in the discussion was that Tennessee's economic well being is dependent on having an adequately prepared work force. I have attached the fact sheet listing these converging opportunities for synergy that was distributed at the meeting.

As an update on the progress of the three working committees of the State P-16 Council, I can report the following:

1. Curriculum Alignment. The curriculum alignment committee has met twice, has consulted University of North Carolina System leadership on the NC process for adding a fourth high school math unit requirement, and has planned to have similar conference call conversations with leadership in Kentucky and Oklahoma, two other states adding the fourth unit. The committee is expanding its membership to include math faculty from colleges and universities, mathematics teachers from middle schools and high schools, and math curriculum framework professionals from the State Department. The committee is exploring the direction of a fourth math unit for high school graduation and university admission. The committee is also assessing the personnel implications for changing high school math requirements, both in the State's production of additional math teachers and professional development of existing teachers.
2. GEAR UP Advisory Board. The announcement for the participating sites for the GEAR UP grant will be released very soon. In many respects, these sites can serve as pilots for curriculum changes in mathematics, interventions and support activities for students, and professional development for teachers.
3. Data management. The various strains of Lottery Scholarship reporting, reporting on Dual Enrollment participation, student electronic transcript exchange, and student information data base through XAP and the overall CollegeforTN.com are coming together. All these opportunities are allied with the curriculum alignment and standards revision process.

The joint meeting, dedicated to a discussion about mathematics standards, set the State P-16 agenda in motion. I will communicate with you regularly about the next steps in this initiative.

Best regards,

Rich Rhoda